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INFO RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE

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NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/GAVITO/HARDING

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/21/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREL MASS MCAP SY IS LE

SUBJECT: LEBANON: MOVING TOWARDS THE LAUNCH OF THE GERMAN BORDER SECURITY PILOT PROGRAM

Classified By: Charge William Grant for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary and Action Request

¶11. (C) The German Border Security Pilot Program (BSPP) has made some strides and will "technically" be able to launch as scheduled on September 1. However, most of the equipment and capabilities will not be functional until approximately October 15. There are still unmet equipment needs and Germans, British and other BSPP donor partners have asked the USG to fund the following requests: USD 25-30,000 to supply AC units for the Common Command Center, USD 35-40,000 to supply office furniture for the Common Command Center, and approximately USD 319,000 to purchase all-terrain vehicles for the mobile border security forces. Action Request: Post requests Department comment on the availability of additional USG funding for these purposes, if possible before the next donor coordination meeting on August 29. End Summary.

Progress on Papers

¶12. (C) Representatives from the German, Canadian, French, British and American embassies met in Beirut on August 20 for a report on the BSPP. British colleagues were particularly pleased with progress on some of the written documentation the GOL was asked to provide. There are now official English/Arabic translations of the GOL decree establishing the new border patrol force, standard operating procedures and terms of reference. These documents have long been promised and now have been delivered. The LAF has also agreed to formally designate a full-time commander for this new initiative and will not require the existing northern area commander cover this portfolio in addition to his regular duties. This is a great administrative advance, according to British and German colleagues.

Danish and British Program Elements Coming Together

¶13. (C) The Danish training team arrived in Beirut on August 16 and have already begun consultations with the LAF to design workshops and training exercises. One member of the team will be on the ground for four months and the other will be in Lebanon for seven months. As promised, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) have appointed a Lieutenant Colonel to serve as the GOL's main "training coordinator" and relations have been productive during these initial consultations.

¶4. (C) British signals specialists are currently in-country to finalize secure communications plans for the BSPP Common Operations Center. They are conducting final site surveys this week and are confirming bandwidth and frequency requirements with their GOL counterparts. The British government decided to go with a top-of-the-line system which can easily be expanded by the GOL to cover border security operations on the eastern border in the future.

Other Pieces Falling Behind

¶5. (C) As the German lead explained, the project pace will largely be determined by procurement specialists. The Canadians and British governments are ready to proceed with the purchase of the 67 vehicles. Now local suppliers will have the search the regional market to fill the orders. The Germans have also agreed to fund GPS equipment for the new vehicles, but the procurement will take 6-8 weeks. The Germans are not optimistic about having all equipment in place for the September 1 official launch. They believe that October 15 is a more realistic date for equipment arrivals.

¶6. (C) Other equipment has been held up in the past by GOL Customs authorities, sometimes for as long as six weeks. The Germans may approach the Prime Minister's office to ask that a special high-level liaison officer be assigned to help cut through the bureaucratic red tape.

¶7. (C) There had been some initial outreach to the Saudis to ask for funding support for fuel, guns, and ammunition. Given the summer holiday season, it has been hard to get a firm response or commitment from the local Saudi embassy.

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¶8. (C) Finally, the need to relocate the training center away from the Nahr al-Barid fighting has complicated matters. Many experts thought the fighting would be over by now, but plans are now being made to move the proposed training site "out of Katusha rocket range" from the camp.

Official launch vs. Big PR Push

¶9. (C) British and Canadian reps were particularly eager to meet the September 1 launch target. While all of the equipment will not be in place, it will be possible to start some of the training programs and "officially" open the BSPP, with a corresponding local press release. Donor colleagues agreed that a larger public event could be scheduled in late October when more of the equipment was actually in place and operational.

¶10. (C) The donor representatives also spent some time talking about public relations for the new border security force. The GOL seems to have trouble "branding" its new division and outside advice might be welcome. (Note: An ISF junior officer showed British reps a draft logo for the new organization, which is a eye somehow crossed with a thunderbolt. The British rep called it "a Masonic eyeball on a kebab." Donors hope to step in before this is universally adopted as the official logo. End Note.)

¶11. (C) There is a need for public relations capacity building. The GOL has designated a media officer for the new border security program, but it may be an officer from the General Security Force, the GOL's intelligence branch. There is some thought that this might not be the best match. In any case, resources will be needed to advertise this new force's presence on the northern border, educate the local population and merchants about new procedures and work with the press to promote the force's achievements.

ACTION REQUEST: USG ASKED TO FUND UNMET RESOURCE NEEDS

¶12. (C) The Germans outlined a number of requirements that are still unmet. Specifically, the USG has been asked to consider the following requests:

- Air conditioning systems for the Common Command Center - approximately USD 25,000 - 30,000. Justification: The Brits have spent their entire budget on the upgraded secure communications package. There are no funds leftover to provide air conditioning for the command center - and this could have a negative effect on the equipment.

- Office Furniture for the Common Command Center - approximately USD 35,000 - 40,000. Again, the British decision to use an upgraded communications package left them short of funds to completely finish the Common Command Center.

- All terrain vehicles (ATVs) and motorcycles - There is a detailed estimate that has been prepared quoting the cost at 240,000 Euros (approximately USD 319,000). The Germans recommended the acquisition of 15 ATVs and 15 motorcycles to enhance the mobility of the border patrols.

¶13. (C) Action Request: Post would like to receive Department comment on the availability of additional funding. There is another donor meeting scheduled for August 29 and we would appreciate a response that we will be allowed to share with the Germans and other donors.

COMMENT

¶14. (C) The Germans are disheartened at the delays, but did not seem to focus on the political and public relations importance of rolling out at least the first phase of training programs on time for the September 1 target date. British and Canadian colleagues really pushed hard to at least be able to "technically" launch on time. In terms of unmet needs, the Saudis are still an unknown and their contributions would be useful. The Canadians, Brits, and French said they had no additional funds and the Germans agreed to add the GPS costs to their own budget. All eyes turned to the USG reps, who agreed to send the requests

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forward for consideration. End Comment.
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